



# Swim Raft Permit Requirements

If you own lakefront or riverfront property and enjoy swimming, you may want to place a swim raft or water trampoline so you and your family can make the most of swimming opportunities. You'll be glad to know that a permit is usually not needed. But swim rafts, water trampolines and other structures in the water can interfere with boat traffic or affect habitat, so some rules do apply.

## What rules apply to rafts?

Wisconsin law mandates that only waterfront property owners have the right to place a swim raft or similar structure into the water, and that the rafts must not interfere with the rights of other property owners or with the public's rights in navigable waters.

That means rafts can't impact boat travel, fish and wildlife habitat, natural scenic beauty, or any other public right in Wisconsin lakes and rivers.

To meet these requirements, any swim raft or water trampoline must be placed within 200 feet of shore. All swimming rafts should be well marked both day and night to warn boaters of a possible navigational hazard.



**A waterfront property owner may place a swim raft in a navigable waterway without a permit if:**

- The swim raft is no more than 200 square feet in surface area; and
- The swim raft is no more than 38 inches high.

Diving boards, slides and other attachments are included in the calculation of total square footage.



**Water trampolines**, which are typically inflatable tubes rising several feet above the water, face the same size limits. Many water trampolines are round, so the size limit generally allows up to a 15-foot diameter trampoline without a permit.

Larger swim rafts or water trampolines are eligible to be placed without a permit only if they are removed from the water every day OR if they are placed in a designated swimming area approved under Chapter NR 5.09, Wis. Adm. Code.

## What if I need a permit?

Wisconsin's lakes and rivers are held in trust for all citizens of the state and the Department of Natural Resources is charged with protecting these public resources for all citizens. To carry out this responsibility, DNR requires that some activities along the shore and in the shallow water undergo environmental review and receive a permit to ensure they don't interfere with boating, fish and wildlife habitat, scenic beauty or any other public right. If your swim raft or water trampoline does not meet the size limitations or exceptions listed in the previous section, chances are it might affect public rights, and you will need a DNR permit before placing it in the water. Your neighbors and other citizens will have an opportunity to comment through a 30-day public notice that is part of the permit review. A \$300 permit fee is also required.

## Where do I get a permit application?

If you need a swim raft permit, you can apply using the "Miscellaneous Structures" application form. This form can be downloaded directly from DNR's Web site at [www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/fhp/waterway/permits/pack24.pdf](http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/fhp/waterway/permits/pack24.pdf).

You also can obtain information and application materials through your local DNR Water Management Specialist. Call your local DNR office to find the name of the Water Management Specialist for your area, or link to application materials and contact information on DNR's Web site at <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/fhp/waterway/swimmingrafts.shtml>.

## What other requirements apply?

### *Make sure it's visible*

All swimming rafts should be well marked both day and night, to warn boaters of a possible navigational hazard. Reflective tape on all corners is one easy way to make your raft visible. Any anchored or drifting boat or other fixed or floating structure that is more than 200 feet from shore must be lit with a white light during the hours from sunset to sunrise.

### *Other waterfront activities*

Many waterfront owners also want to have a pier, wharf, shore protection, or swimming beach. Some limits apply to these activities as well. Check DNR's website or talk to your Water Management Specialist for more information.

### *Local regulations*

Many municipalities have ordinances to address waterfront uses in their community. So check with your town, city or village to see if they have any rules or permit requirements before starting your project.

## For more information...

You can find application forms, factsheets and more information about swim rafts and other waterfront activities at DNR's Waterway and Wetland Web site: start at [www.dnr.state.wi.us](http://www.dnr.state.wi.us) and use the drop down menu to select the topic "Waterway and Wetlands Permits."

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